



## Lay Organization At A Glance (What's It All About?)

What does the Lay Organization do other than wear “blue and white” and attend conventions? Let me testify!

In the current AME Book of Discipline, we can find the purpose of the Lay Organization on pages 400. In the Connectional Lay Organization's Study Guide (now Connectional means international describing AMEs connected around the globe), it is summarized very simply, “The purpose of the Lay Organization is to train the lay members of the AME Church.”

That is actually old news dating back to 1912 when the Laymen's Organization and Laymen's Missionary League merged to form the official lay movement known as the Laymen's Organization. In fact, the mission was re-stated often, by reading “The Object and Purpose of the Lay Organization at each Lay Day observance. However, one of the most powerful statements about the purpose of the Lay Organization came from the Bench of Bishops in 1946. (And, that was two years *before* the Connectional Lay College was changed to become the Connectional Lay Organization.) Let me read that statement with the hopes that it might inspire and inform not only those who have currently been called to ministry in the Lay Organization, but those who are in search a ministry of *activism, evangelism and excellence*:

“It is natural that activity on the part of the laymen should be resented by some well intentioned but misinformed individuals. One of the hopeful signs in our Church is the discontent among the laity. African Methodism, revolutionary by nature should stir and not quiet discontent, for an inactive and unintelligent laity can do great damage to the Church. Corruption is inevitably the result when laity of any group remains inactive, unintelligent or docile. African Methodism needs a vigorous healthy and well informed laity. This will produce a productive and dynamic Church.” *That's cutting edge stuff, from the Bench of Bishops 70 years ago!!*

The Connectional Lay Organization (CLO), in its constitution and by-laws provides for a tiered structure at each level – from the international (or connectional) to the local congregation. The goal is to provide for lay ministry at its best, by insuring effective and relevant training for service among the laity (that is every member who is not ordained). The Lay Organization should be engaged in helping to prepare each ministry to be its very best ...choir, ushers, trustees, stewards, stewardesses, missionaries, Sunday School & Christian Education workers, Sons of Allen, all auxiliaries & ministries.

Even in 2017, fulfilling this mission calls for a transition or change in the way we do things. That transition should cause those of us in serious lay ministry to evaluate our “then-ness and now-ness” and in so doing, discard the trash of our past, habits that do not reflect our Christian walk, routine ministry that does not serve the “present age” and sycophantic behavior – going along to get along. The Lay Organization should be totally committed to helping and stimulating each lay person transform himself or herself from where we are to where God wants us to be - real Christian soldiers. The Lay Organization has been charged with training so that each of us can find and use the skills and talents from the arsenal of gifts that God has given each one of us, and to do it with excellence.

We begin by remembering that “God has not called us to be successful”, but that “God has called us to be faithful”. Today, we – Ward's Lay Organization - invite you to seriously contemplate YOUR transition, *meditate and pray during this worship experience, and prepare to serve*, .being mindful that “there is no greater honor than to be used in God's service.” Let God use you, now and in the days ahead!

God can do anything, you know – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us. *Ephesians 3:20-21 (The Word translation)*